



2013 Budget Review

CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES October 15, 2012 4:30 PM

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

J. Waltman, F. Acosta, D. Reed, S. Marmarou, R. Corcoran, M. Goodman-Hinnershitz, D. Sterner

OTHERS PRESENT:

L. Kelleher, D. Cituk, W. Heim, M. Winchester, M. Bembenick, C. Younger, C. Zale, C. Snyder, V. Spencer, E. Lloyd

Executive Session

The evening session started in Executive session in the Council Office at 4:30 pm to discuss matters pertaining to the Police Contract arbitration and contracts approved falling below the Council approval threshold. The executive session concluded at approximately 5:55 pm.

The group reconvened in the Penn Room. Ms. Reed called the meeting to order at approximately 6:10 pm.

Police Budget

Chief Heim introduced Acting Captain Madison Winchester, who was appointed to fill the position vacated through Captain Spotts retirement. The Police section of the budget book was distributed. Chief Heim stated that the Department is made up of 4 divisions: Administration, Patrol, Investigation, and Special Services.

Chief Heim stated that 94% of his budget is personnel related and the remaining 6% is operational, which leaves little room for reduction. He noted that while no new programs are planned, there are some new major expenses for 2012 such as the annual cost of \$107,000 for the required new radio system and the Video Safety Unit. He stated that the grant for this program, obtained through the late Senator Specter and Congressman Gerlach, expires at the end of this year and leaves the City responsible for the costs of the program.

Chief Heim stated that Phase 2 of the camera program which doubles the camera coverage will be completed early next year. He described the great benefits of the program and how the system also links in surveillance cameras used by homeowners and businesses. He stated that the cameras are a great crime solving tool and often reduce the time it takes to investigate crimes.

Chief Heim stated that the staffing reductions in the Department created the need to reduce the staffing of the Criminal Investigation area and add coverage in Patrol so the Department can adequately respond to calls for service. He noted that a 3rd party collector is now doing the City's false burglar alarm billing and collection. He reviewed the Department's productivity and goals.

Chief Heim stated that although the staffing was reduced in 2012, the number of response calls has not decreased. He stated that on average, the Department responds to approximately 79,000 calls per year and this year the Department is tracking to respond to 82,000 calls per year. *(Note: Fire responds to 17,000 calls per year - 70% of the calls are medical in nature and 30% of the calls, or 5,400, relate to fire.)*

Chief Heim provided a breakdown of overtime costs by area:

Service Area	2011	2012
Court	\$128,356	\$59,159
MDJ (includes Codes)	\$519,938	\$233,499
Regular Assign	\$266,265	\$170,794
Sick Replacement	\$238,391	\$50,054
Vac Replacement	\$149,539	\$44,681
Special Assign	\$326,752	\$274,410
Comp Time	\$1,860,241	\$938,772

Chief Heim explained the overtime containment tactics employed, which has significantly reduced overtime expenses in the vacation replacement, comp time and sick replacement areas.

Chief Heim stated that in 2008-09 the City employed 200+ officers and in 2010 the City employed 174 Officers. He stated that in 2011 there were mass retirements spawned by the end of the last contract. He stated that although the City put approximately 36 new officers into training, the number of officers fluctuated through 2012, sometimes dropping as low as 130 officers.

The Chief called the groups attention to the overtime costs for the Court and MDJ areas. He noted that the average moving violation has a ticket fine of \$25, which rises to \$111 when court fees are tacked on; however, a guilty verdict only returns \$12.50 to the City for every moving violation. He noted that the amount returned to the City has been at \$12.50 since he was a rookie patrolman in the mid 1970's. He noted that those who claim the City will produce revenue through writing traffic tickets are misguided as it costs the City more in overtime costs than it gains in return revenue.

Ms. Kelleher stated that the local State legislators have been asked to change this several times with no response. She also noted the PLM (PA League of Municipalities) has also been asked to lead the effort to get this changed; however, they were not interested in becoming involved. She stated that Rep. Caltagirone recently said that the State is currently considering changes to the fees returned to municipalities.

Mr. Corcoran inquired if the Reading School District will be funding police officers for school patrol. Chief Heim stated that while the District agrees to place two patrol officers inside the Citadel, they have not yet decided on the reimbursement amount, thus that line item is zeroed out. Chief Heim noted that since the officers have been back inside the Citadel, the criminal issues are quelled.

Mr. Sterner inquired about the cost of the K9 program. Chief Heim stated that grant funding and local fundraising covered the costs to purchase dogs, equipment and vehicles. He stated that veterinary services are mostly donated with the City only needing to cover medication for the dogs.

Chief Heim called the groups attention to the crime stats and the staffing. He noted the significant reduction in crime when the City had 200+ officers. He noted that the City has been fortunate that the number of serious crimes has not increased with the decreased number of officers. Acting Captain Winchester expressed the belief that the reduction in the number of officers requires officers to do more with less. He stated that many officers rotate through special assignments which increase their ability in the field. The Chief agreed and noted that when the Department was well staffed, police reports were forwarded to Criminal Investigation (CI) for follow up and now patrol officers are tasked with solving the crimes.

Chief Heim again noted that with 168 officers, the Department will respond to over 82,000 calls in 2012. He noted that there are 10 unfilled positions in the 2012 and 2013 budget.

Ms. Snyder stated that she has discussed shifting some police service areas such as dispatch and investigations to the County; however, the County is not in a position to take over these functions until sometime after 2014. Chief Heim described services already provided by the County such as central booking and accident reconstruction.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz inquired if programs like the 222 Corridor program was beneficial. Chief Heim stated that the program established connections between municipalities and officials which helped enforcement and information.

Other

None.

Budget Review Meetings

The next meeting is on Wednesday, October 17th at 4:30 pm and the CD Department will be reviewed. The meeting adjourned at approximately 7 pm.

*Respectfully submitted by
Linda A. Kelleher CMC, City Clerk*